United Nations

Daily Highlights

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# TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Bosnia and Herzegovina tells General Assembly it will limit demand for lifting of arms embargo if certain conditions met; Honduras, Uruguay, Argentina, Latvia, Germany, Netherlands and Poland among other speakers in today's general debate.

+ Colombia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Romania, Norway, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Iran and Angola among speakers in general debate yesterday.

+ Secretary-General, toasting Heads of State and Government, stresses link between peace, development and democracy; United States President hails Secretary-General's leadership and vision.

+ United Nations details payments to peace-keeping and regular budgets by Japan, Russian Federation and United States.

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Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic today said that his country would limit its demand for the lifting of the arms embargo against it if certain conditions were fulfilled. In an address to the General Assembly, he said Bosnia and Herzegovina would only seek the adoption of a formal decision whose application would be deferred for six months.

He gave the following conditions: that all United Nations resolutions on Bosnia and Herzegovina be implemented; that measures be taken to effectively monitor the border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) to prevent any transport of troops or arms; that should such transport occur, the suspension of some sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia would be terminated and tighter measures imposed; that there would be no further easing of sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until it recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia within internationally recognized borders; that a resolution be adopted without delay to strengthen the protection of and extend the safe areas; and that certain measures be taken to end the strangulation of Sarajevo.

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President Izetbegovic said also that the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) should continue to carry out its mandate. Bosnia and Herzegovina was fully committed to democracy within its internationally recognized borders with full ethnic, religious and political rights for all. The Serbs would have all rights up to the highest level of autonomy, but could not have a state within a state. The Republic also had a right to self-defense; if its compromise proposal were rejected, it would ask its friends to lift the arms embargo immediately, and even unilaterally.

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Honduran President Carlos Roberto Reina told the General Assembly today that while his people had developed a democratic system, they had not escaped from the great Central American crisis of the past. Continuing problems impeded development and doomed many to extreme poverty. Since the democratic elections eight months ago, efforts had been made to address lingering problems. Faced with current challenges, a moral revolution was being launched to reform the administration of the State. Such a moral revolution meant good government, transparency, and political democracy. It meant an economy with a human face and integration with the countries of Central America.

President Reina called for a dialogue between North and South, and for international cooperation to promote peaceful development. In the past, billions of dollars had been absorbed by military confrontation; now, only limited resources were being invested in the new democracies. Those who had helped to destroy Central American nations during the cold war had a responsibility to help rebuild them. He also stressed the need to liberalize trade for the benefit of developing countries.

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Luis Alberto Lacalle, President of Uruguay, today stressed that United Nations peace-keeping operations must be carried out in full compliance with the principles of international law. Action should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter only as a last resort, after exhausting the political means described in Chapter VI. Furthermore, action could only be taken upon the unmistakable emergence of a real threat to international peace and security. The Security Council must bear in mind the views of regional organizations and neighbouring countries. Peace-keeping operations must have a feasible and precise mandate and a realistic schedule.

The financial burden arising from peace-keeping operations could not be accepted as an excuse for decreasing development assistance, he continued. It was necessary to concentrate resources to solve the cause of the problems -- poverty and underdevelopment -- instead of their effects. He expressed concern about the deterioration of the world economy. Freedom of trade had to be realized, and it was important that the Uruguay Round of trade talks had been concluded. However, that achievement would be meaningless unless trade

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was strengthened in the future. Prompt ratification of the Marrakech Agreements was necessary to allow the World Trade Organization to come into force on 1 January 1995.

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President Carlos Saul Menem of Argentina today told the General Assembly that the two major evils plaguing the end of the twentieth century were terrorism and drug trafficking. Regarding terrorism, he was speaking with conviction and pain because of the hundreds of Argentinians who had died as a result of the recent attack on the Jewish community in Buenos Aires. He thanked the Security Council for its condemnation of that attack, and stressed that concerted action was needed to combat terrorism. The United Nations should establish a unit for that purpose. It was inadmissible that any Government should encourage terrorism, and a multilateral mechanism should be considered to tackle the question of abuses of diplomatic immunity in cases of terrorism.

President Menem reiterated Argentina's rights over the Malvinas Islands and the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, although he noted that it had a satisfactory relationship with the United Kingdom in other matters. He also expressed gratitude to Dante Caputo, a former Argentinian Foreign Minister, for his efforts to solve the Haitian crisis.

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The President of Latvia, Guntis Ulmanis, today said that with the withdrawal of Russian troops, his country was now free of all foreign forces. However, the security of Latvia and the other Baltic States was still an important concern for the international community. He stressed the importance of regional cooperation, particularly the "three plus five" model -- the three Baltic and five Nordic States. Latvia would do its utmost to promote mutual trust and understanding on the shores of the Baltic Sea.

President Ulmanis called attention to the suffering experienced in his country during the Second World War and the Soviet occupation. Latvia had lost nearly 14 percent of its population during the War, and the native population had subsequently become a minority in seven of its largest cities. The Latvian language had been under threat of extinction, and the protection of the nation's cultural heritage was now a priority. Latvia was also dedicated to the protection and promotion of human rights. The United Nations should devote a greater percentage of its regular budget to that end, he concluded.

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German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, speaking on behalf of the European Union, today urged the strengthening of the United Nations and the multilateral system for safeguarding peace worldwide. The European Union hoped to create a network of mutually supporting institutions which would include the Western European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

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(NATO) and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). All must work together to help the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) had the unreserved support of the European Union. The international community must make it clear to the Bosnian Serbs that in rejecting the peace plan they could not depend on "tacit approval." There must be no toleration of a policy of war and expulsion.

The Europe Union welcomed the idea of stand-by arrangements for United Nations peace-keeping operations, the Foreign Minister continued. Germany would be able to join in those operations as the German Constitutional Court had cleared the way for participation a few months ago. Security Council reform was an important issue which required a productive outcome, he added.

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Hans Van Mierlo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, said the prerequisites for successful action by the United Nations were credibility and legitimacy. All peoples of the world must be fairly represented in the Organization and have a fair say in decision-making. There must be a balance between burdens and benefits, and an awareness at all levels that the United Nations could make a difference. A substantial part of the growing cynicism about government stemmed from the perception of a lack of common decency -- the feeling that governments and institutions worked for their own good first and the interests of the people second.

The role of the Security Council had clearly changed, he went on to say. The yardstick for great-power status was no longer the number of nuclear bombs, but the concrete contribution a country would make to stem the tide of war, misery and poverty. For that reason, the Netherlands favoured the admission of Germany and Japan to the Council as permanent members. Equitable representation of various regions would also have to be addressed. Equally important was transparency and closer coordination between the Council and Member States. The Netherlands, for example, was the eleventh ranked contributor to the United Nations budget, yet was not involved in Council decisions. The Council could no longer operate as an exclusive club.

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Polish Foreign Minister Andrzej Olechowski said his country's friendly relations with its neighbours were best evidenced by the treaties it had concluded with them. In terms of regional cooperation, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic and Poland had formed a non-binding structure known as the Visegrad Group which had worked out a Central European Free Trade Agreement. Poland was also striving to become a member of institutions whose membership had been determined by the logic of the divided world. It wanted to enter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) not as a front-line State but rather as a country furthering cooperation.

Medium-sized States were a little recognized asset of the United Nations, he continued. They could form nuclei for regional integration as they could not be suspected of seeking to dominate. Poland supported the enlargement of

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the Security Council on a consensus basis and in a way that preserved its effectiveness. In Poland's view, more power to the regions, more authority to the Council, and more involvement on the part of medium-sized countries were the objectives of United Nations reform.

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The President of Colombia, Ernesto Samper Pizano, yesterday warned that "neo-protectionism" was threatening the free trade prospects of developing countries. Other threats included unemployment, the postponement of social investment plans, and the development of economic blocs which prevented free trade for all, he told the General Assembly. There was a need for new rules to enable developing countries to acquire technology, to finance their infrastructures, and to become competitive in a world where selling was more important than producing. Those aspirations must materialize in a new development model.

That new model should be an alternative to the protectionist system of the 1960s, because globalization required open and competitive economies, he continued. It should also be an alternative to the neoliberal model which looked to the market to correct all imbalances, and to the "savage capitalism" which imposed the rule of "every man for himself." The new development model must promote: the modernization of productive structures; solidarity on social issues; good governance; and cooperation in the international community based on adjusting domestic policies on the basis of global objectives.

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Nicaraguan President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro told the General Assembly yesterday that Central America provided one of the best examples of the new wave of democracy. In less than a year, it had seen four free elections that produced new Governments. Respect for civil and political rights had been strengthened; conditions had been created for the wider enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights; and civil power was prevailing over military power. Next month, Central American countries would enter into an alliance for sustainable development, which would create a new development model to preserve the region's resources and way of life.

In the past year, Nicaragua had made great efforts to achieve a macroeconomic balance while establishing a firm foundation for sustainable development, she stated. It had made substantial progress in improving public finances and reducing inflation. Nicaragua had also re-established relations with foreign debt holders and multilateral agencies, and had carried out structural adjustment reforms. The success of that programme and the attainment of sustainable development would depend on the country's capacity to promote production and investment, increase employment and improve the quality of life of its people. The international aid received by Nicaragua would also be an important determinant.

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Armando Calderon Sol, President of El Salvador, yesterday underlined the importance of human resources development. In that regard, recent and forthcoming United Nations conferences were of major importance, including the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development, and the World Summit for Social Development.

Reviewing developments in his own country, the President cited measures being taken to reduce poverty as part of a comprehensive approach to achieve social peace. He also reviewed measures being taken to implement the 1992 Peace Accords. However, there were some problems in the area of human rights. During a recent visit of the Commission on Human Rights Independent Experts, his Government had submitted a proposal to improve the situation of human rights in the country, which he hoped would be accepted by the Commission. Progress on matters such as land reform had been delayed because of a lack of resources. The Government was experiencing problems relating to financial aid which had not been provided, he added.

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President Ion Iliescu of Romania said yesterday that the composition of the Security Council should be reviewed in order to ensure representation for all geographical regions. A limited increase in membership would have to include Germany and Japan as permanent members, taking into account their potential contribution to United Nations activities. That should not mean the establishment of a "condominium" of the permanent members of the Council over the rest of the world. It should only mean that they assumed a higher commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security.

The biggest threat to international peace and security was the widening gap between rich and poor States, President Iliescu said. The corrective measures undertaken so far by the international community, including development decades and various assistance programmes, had not prevented those negative tendencies. The global balance could be upset, particularly through massive population shifts, if those trends were allowed to continue. The international community must make a determined and conscientious effort to promote economic growth in developing countries. The United Nations system was the most appropriate framework for launching such a "partnership for development."

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Norway's Foreign Minister, Bjorn Tore Godal, yesterday expressed support for an even stronger United Nations role in the peaceful settlement of disputes, preventive diplomacy and the promotion of human rights. Norway also advocated the strengthening of peace-keeping activities. Member States must enable the United Nations to do in the field what they professed to support in the conference halls. Nearly 1 per cent of the entire Norwegian population had participated in peace-keeping operations, he noted. Proper communication

between the Security Council and the troop-contributing countries was particularly important, and required regular consultations and information sharing.

During the past year, the peace process had been further consolidated in the Middle East, he continued. Both Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) were determined to honour the commitments made, and the international community must also shoulder its responsibilities. He appealed to Member States for contributions, especially to meet the short-term needs of the Palestinian Authority. In its capacity as Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, Norway would continue to work with donor countries and the parties themselves to ensure that the peace dividend benefited Palestinians in their daily lives.

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Lakshman Kadirgamar, Sri Lanka's Minister for Foreign Affairs, said his country stood on the threshold of a new era of tolerance and peace. In August, the Peoples' Alliance had been voted into office after 17 years in opposition in a parliamentary general election internationally acclaimed as free and fair. The poll was a victory for moderation, tolerance and unity, and demonstrated that the Sinhala people were not racists. Under the leadership of the new Prime Minister, a peaceful transition of power had been effected, defying the cynical predictions of some.

The new Government reflected the multi-ethnic, multi-religious fabric of its society, he continued. In Parliament, the Government had the support of a number of political parties, including those of the Tamil and Muslim communities. It was well poised to end the conflict in the north-east part of the country through political negotiations, as mandated by the people. The Government would pursue its quest for peace with determination. Sri Lanka's recent experience might fortify the efforts to banish prejudice and rancour among peoples elsewhere, he added.

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Christopher Haiveta, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Planning of Papua New Guinea, said new challenges called for increased multilateral diplomacy. He valued regional cooperation as a basis for stability and development cooperation, and cited Papua New Guinea's membership of the South Pacific Forum and the Melanesian Spearhead Group, as well as its association with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a special observer. Those regional organizations had forged mutual cooperation among members. Such cooperation was evident during the recent South Pacific Forum held in Brisbane, Australia, where six countries -- Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu -- agreed to work for a common approach to logging and the export of timber.

He stated that 85 per cent of the people of Papua New Guinea lived in rural communities where the basic food and shelter needs were secured on a sustainable basis. However, various parts of the country had recently been

hit by natural disasters which had placed a severe burden on resources. He expressed appreciation for the promptness with which various Governments, including Australia, New Zealand and the United States, responded to disasters occurring in smaller island countries of the region.

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Sudanese Foreign Minister Hussain Suliman Abu Salih yesterday briefed the General Assembly on the relationship between religion and the State in his country. His Government proposed a formula which enabled the majority to choose whatever suited its cultural heritage without infringing on the rights of the rest of the population. That was why southern Sudan, which was mainly non-Muslim, was exempted from the application of Islamic laws. The allegation that the root cause of the war there was religious or ethnic was rebutted by the fact that most displaced persons moved northwards and only a few migrated outside the country. Southern representatives at the Juba Conference in May had stressed the unity of the country, and rejected the isolated agenda of the rebels.

Sudan applied the Shura as a methodology of government to ensure the universality of opinions free from tribal and sectorial fanaticism, he continued. The Shura was the overall vessel for political, developmental and social performance. The Government had established the Supreme Council for Human Rights and had given it constitutional liberty. The Justice System had been reformed to guarantee freedom of litigation, equity and the rule of law. The Government had also reinforced the role of women in the Sudan and preserved their rights. It had enabled them to occupy high constitutional, judicial, political and economic posts, he noted.

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The Foreign Minister of Iran, Ali Akbar Velayati, said yesterday that a few "self-proclaimed victors of the cold war" felt entitled to determine the course of international relations and to guide the Security Council. The transformation of the Council into an instrument to justify or enforce the policies of some permanent members was incompatible with the spirit of the Charter. A body responsible for maintaining international peace and security must not be manipulated by those "who have historically sought to serve their own self-interest at the expense of international peace."

The best example of the Council's lack of balance was its failure to deal resolutely with Israel's repeated acts of aggression against Palestine, Lebanon and Syria, he said. Under the disguise of the peace process, Israel sought to continue its occupation by repressing Muslims and its opponents. The Council's unprincipled approach to different crises was also demonstrated by its response to the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina. For more than two years, defenceless Bosnian Muslims had been resisting ethnic cleansing and gradual annihilation. The Council had not only failed to implement its own resolutions, but had empowered the aggressors to continue

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their atrocities and deprived a Member State of its right of self-defence. The Council must lift the arms embargo against Bosnia, which most States believed to be illegal, now.

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Venancio de Moura, Angola's Minister of External Relations, said hopes for a better world had been betrayed since the end of the cold war, with the proliferation of internal conflicts and political instability. The United Nations must define guidelines to prevent the application of different criteria to the solution of different conflicts. In order to maintain the credibility of the Organization, all crises and conflicts must be given fair and equal treatment. United Nations procedures must be restructured to make them compatible with current realities

Angola's people today faced somber prospects characterized by extreme poverty because of the war imposed on them by the militaristic wing of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), he said. However, UNITA had finally accepted proposals on national reconciliation, and that was an important step towards peace. He urged the international community to continue to pressure UNITA's militaristic wing so that a comprehensive agreement could be reached. The Security Council must be ready to act immediately to avoid any pretexts for non-compliance, including sending the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) component immediately after the signing of the agreement.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali yesterday said that while the world was in a process of transition following the cold war, words and concepts were acquiring new meanings. At a luncheon in honour of Heads of State and Government attending the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, he said three words came to mind: peace, development and democracy.

The United Nations had been founded after a war between States, he continued. Today, wars happened within States, and peace had acquired a new definition. Peace between States was the work of diplomats; peace within States was the work of economists, electoral observers and human rights monitors. Peace within States was the outcome of successful policies for development and democracy, but those words were also acquiring new meanings. Development no longer meant economic growth alone -- it also had environmental and social dimensions.

The word "democracy" did not appear in the United Nations Charter, but the notion of political power based on the will of the people was central to the Organization's work, the Secretary-General said. He stressed the need for the democratization of international relations, and for broader democracy within the United Nations. Together, the international community could find new meanings for old words, and negotiate the transition from the cold war to lasting peace.

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United States President William Clinton thanked the Secretary-General for his vision and for his efforts to turn ideals into reality. He praised the Secretary-General for his outstanding leadership, and cited his use of diplomacy to prevent bloodshed and his work to promote long-term stability.

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Japan will soon make a payment of $200 million to the United Nations peace-keeping budget, bringing that country current on its accounts, a spokesman for the Organization said today. The Russian Federation made payments of $30 million in July and $20 million last week to the regular and peace-keeping budgets.

The spokesman recalled that the United States had announced payments to the United Nations totaling $1.2 billion. Of that amount, $335 million had been received on 1 September. The United States was expected to make payments of $565 million by the end of October, and $300 million by the end of the year. As of today, it owed a total of $1.17 billion in unpaid assessments.

However, the spokesman continued, the Organization owed some $1 billion to 70 troop-contributing countries, and most of the money received for the peace-keeping budget would be used up clearing those arrears.

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